

February 8, 2022

Ms. Katie Cristol, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: Marbella Site Plan

Dear Chair Cristol,

I am writing to express the view of the Transportation Commission regarding the proposed Marbella Site Plan:


The Transportation Commission, by a vote of 8-0, recommends that the County Board approve the proposed Site Plan.

The commission considered this item at its January 27th, 2022 meeting. The Commission heard a presentation from County Staff. There were no public speakers.

Commission discussion centered primarily around 1) the parking ratio (with some commissioners expressing a desire for a lower parking ratio and others expressing support for the applicant's ability to determine an appropriate parking ratio) and 2) the number of units and bedrooms that have been removed from the proposal since it was initially put forward.

Present and voting in favor were Commissioners Brose, Lantelme, Locker, Ludlow, Muratovic, Price, Rajtik, and Slatt. I am happy to answer any questions.

Best,



Christopher Slatt, Chairman

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMISSION ON HOUSING
ERIC BERKEY, CHAIR

One Courthouse Plaza 2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 700 Arlington, VA 22201
TEL 703.228.3760 FAX 703.228.3834 www.arlingtonva.us

February 9, 2022

Hon. Katie Cristol, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: Marbella Redevelopment Project (site A)

Dear Chair Cristol:

At its February 3, 2022, virtual public hearing, the Citizens Advisory Commission on Housing (Housing Commission) considered the allocation of Affordable Housing Investment Fund (AHIF) loan funds for use by the Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing (APAH) to help finance the development and construction of Marbella Site A Apartments, a proposed 12-story residential development that will contain a total of 234 new committed affordable units (CAFs) and will be located at 1300 North Pierce Street.

The Commission advises the County Board to approve the AHIF loan to APAH, as outlined in the staff report, to help finance the development and construction of the Marbella Site A, and to adopt the resolution to designate the site as a Revitalization Area. The Commission supports this project because the 234 newly constructed CAFs at Marbella Site A will be affordable for 75 years. Of the 234 total units, 10.3% (24 units) will be constructed to meet American National Standards Institute Type-A accessibility requirements, and 5 of those units (2%) will be accessible for individuals with hearing/visual impairments. The development will also include 9% of the units as Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) units, and 110 units will meet Universal Design guidelines. The project will also support lower income households, of the total 234 units, approximately 9% will be affordable up to 30% of AMI, 28% of the units will be affordable up to 50% of AMI, and the remaining 64% of units will be affordable up to 60% of AMI. Approximately 64% of total units at Marbella Site A will be composed of family-sized units (150 units). Simply put, this proposal is very much in line with several of the County's affordable housing goals.

While the Commission is supportive overall of the project, several members expressed concern about the Site Plan Review Process and concessions that were made during that process. Several Commission members were concerned that the SPRC composition included members from the surrounding townhomes, but no renters from Marbella. Some Commissioners were also frustrated that the process resulted in 31 fewer family sized units given the great need in the community for affordable family sized units. Specifically, the discussion at several Commission meetings about this concern focused upon the direction Planning staff gave to APAH to downscale the building due to massing concerns, which led to the conversion of these 31 two-bedroom units into one-bedroom units. Several Commissioners asked whether such direction was consistent with the County affordable housing goals and the particular zoning amendment the County Board made last year to allow such density on this site for affordable housing developments, to which one staff

member replied that the trade-off constituted good planning. While a formal vote was not taken upon this particular concern, it would be reasonable nevertheless for the County Board to consider whether it would be advisable to revisit staff direction in situations such as this, as these family-sized units have been lost and given the timeframe of this development, the County Board is very likely unable to reverse such a decision if it so desired.

Additionally, Doris Ray, the liaison from the Disability Advisory Commission, noted that, although the Marbella Project is an excellent example of an affordable housing project that advances many of the goals of the Affordable Housing Master Plan (AHMP), including increasing the number of affordable housing units which are fully accessible (Type A) units, it did not address several elements related to common area and unit accessibility. Specifically, Ms. Ray raised concerns about one of the building entrances to one of the buildings having a main entrance with a path of travel from the street that requires using stairs with a separate path of travel that is accessible for persons using mobility devices (manual and power wheelchairs or scooters and walkers) which is separate from the main path of travel which has a large staircase. Ms. Ray pointed out that this type of design, also used in the American Legion Project, tends to reward a view that separate building entrances that are accessible rather than inclusive. Additionally, Ms. Ray raised concerns about the 125 units designated as having "Universal Design," which do not include elements that make them physically accessible and usable are not truly accessible and usable for seniors with physical disabilities.

The Commission vote on the motion was 10-0-1. Members in favor were Commissioners Arthur, Berkey, Bray, Browne, Edwards, Hemminger, Jackson, MacBeth, Montgomery, and Serfis, with Commissioner Norris abstaining.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Eric Berkey
Chair